



News Release

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Utah's Comprehensive Tobacco Prevention and Control Program Reports Significant Progress But There's More Work To Do According to Health Officials

(SALT LAKE CITY, UT) –Utah adult and teen tobacco use rates are declining, more smokers made serious attempts to quit, tobacco consumption is down and fewer retailers are selling tobacco products to minors. The Utah Department of Health (UDOH) reported this significant progress in its third annual Tobacco Prevention and Control Activity Report released today.

UDOH Deputy Director, Dr. Scott D. Williams, says, “Since 1999, Utah’s adult smoking rate has declined by nine percent, making Utah one of only two states in the country that shows a linear decrease in adult smoking since 1996. We already had the lowest rate in the country, so this accomplishment is particularly striking.”

“We are pleased with Utah’s successes, but there is still much more work to be done,” adds Williams, “Even with these improvements tobacco use remains the leading preventable cause of death in the United States, killing 1,200 Utahns annually. More than 200,000 Utahns continue to use tobacco and incur more than \$273 million in annual smoking-related medical costs.”

The report cited 2003 Fiscal Year tobacco prevention and control activities funded through the Tobacco Settlement Restricted Account and Cigarette Tax Restricted Account. These efforts have yielded many positive results:

The Truth marketing campaign reached adults and youth throughout the state:

- Ninety-six percent of teens surveyed and 94 percent of adults recall seeing the ads during the past month.
- Sixty-six percent of youth and 71 percent of adults are aware of the Utah Tobacco Quit Line.
- New media campaign messages and strategies reached Hispanic/Latino and Native American populations more effectively.

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The Truth campaign is persuasive:

- Ninety-three percent of youth and 64 percent of adults report that targeted ads were convincing.
- Ninety-nine percent of youth and 77 percent of adults believe that secondhand smoke is harmful.

Program efforts cause Utahns to take action:

- Fifteen thousand Utahns contacted the Utah Tobacco Quit Line; a 13 percent increase over 2002.
- Teen enrollment in quitting classes increased 25 percent.
- Inquiries for cessation services or prevention programs are directly related to the media saturation of The Truth anti-tobacco multi-media campaign ads.

Efforts to protect youth expanded:

- School districts strengthened and enforced tobacco-free school policies.
- Five thousand five hundred youth entered the Truth from Youth Anti-tobacco Advertising contest.
- Local Health Departments (LHDs), retailers, and law enforcement worked together to decrease tobacco sales to minors by 50 percent from 2001.

“The UDOH, LHDs, and community partners have implemented nationally proven strategies throughout the state,” says UDOH Tobacco Prevention and Control Program manager, Heather Borski, MPH, CHES. “These strategies fit together and reinforce each other to form a comprehensive, effective program. We hope to continue to build upon these efforts, and move forward to better reach underserved and high-risk populations. We will also make a special effort to educate and empower the public to assure that future generations are not exposed to tobacco products or secondhand smoke.”

Williams adds, “The settlement agreement between the tobacco industry and the states finally made funds available for significant smoking prevention and cessation programs. But the tobacco industry has responded by spending more money than ever on marketing and promoting their products, including \$90.8 million in tobacco marketing in 2001 in Utah alone. This is ten times more than what Utah spends on anti-tobacco programs.”

The UDOH Tobacco Prevention and Control Program prepared the annual report, with the University of Utah's Social Research Institute serving as an independent project evaluator. The full report is available on line at www.tobaccofreeutah.org.

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